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ABSTRACT

Part of a larger investigation of teacher-child-peer interactions among two- and three-year-old children in day care, this microanalytic study of toddler-initiated bids (attempts to communicate with caregivers) and teacher responses depicts in detail toddler-caregiver interaction. Subjects for the study were 25 males and 25 females between the ages of 24 and 30 months who were members of low-income families whose day care fees were paid by Title XX funds. APPROACH (A Procedure for Patterning Responses Of Adults and CHildren), a fine-grained ecological technique for observing and coding child interactions with peers, objects, and caregivers was used to record 80 minutes of behavior per child. From the APPROACH records, children's communication and interaction attempts with teachers were coded into one and only one of the following five categories: seeking help, requesting attention, distressed or negative approach to teacher, positive approach, and attempt to seek information. Teacher responses to toddler communication attempts were coded into one and only one of the following nine categories: ego boosts, teaching, questions, attends, combinations of positive with control or negative responses, commands, negative responses, ignores, and unknown. Findings concerning teachers' responsiveness to seeking help, requests for attention, distress/negative bids, positive bids, and seeking information are discussed in detail and implications for caregiver training are drawn. (Author/RH)

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Toddlers' Bids and Teachers' Responses in Title XX Day Care Centers

Alice S. Honig, Ph.D. and Donna S. Wittmer, M.S.

Problem

Belsky & Steinberg (1978) in a review article on the effects of day care have stated that "we know shockingly little about the impact of day care on children, on their parents, and on the society in which these children and parents live." (p. 929) He goes on to state that most research on day care has been conducted in high-quality University-run day care centers. Children from low-income families usually do not attend these centers. Rather they attend centers that serve primarily families whose fees are paid for by federal government Title XX monies because of the families' low-income eligibility. One study that was completed on Title XX day care centers found the care custodial at best (Sheehan & Abbott, 1979).

Increasingly, mothers of very young children are going to work and seeking alternative care for their toddlers. There is an urgent need to know what is happening in Title XX day care classrooms to toddlers whose needs for autonomous independent striving within the context of a loving responsive environment are so great. Alternating needs for autonomy and dependency often make it difficult for toddlers to interact successfully with peers and adults. These see-sawing needs (for example, announcing "Me do it myself" and a bit later clinging with whining demands to the caregiver) may seem baffling or exasperating to some caregivers. Yet, if a child is to leave Erikson's second stage of development with more of a sense of autonomy ("I can have my own wants and wishes") than doubt and shame, the caregiver must successfully help the toddler cope with conflicts between desires to do it themselves and their need for help and comfort from adults (Erikson, 1963). If aware of such variations in normal toddler interactions and if attuned to the developmental struggle inherent in attaining

an increasingly secure sense of autonomy, teachers can plan more effective interactions to support increasingly more mature toddler behaviors.

Much research in child development assumes a directionality of effect overwhelmingly from adult to child behaviors. Yet, there is a recent surge of recognition that young children have an effect on the behaviors of caregivers (Bell, 1977). Toddler initiatives may trigger more or less facilitative adult responses. Toddlers express desires, seek attention and help, want answers to questions, and initiate positive and negative contacts. These child behaviors may well impact on how the caregiver interacts with the toddler. Microanalytic study of the chains of interaction between caregiver and child, especially those initiated by the toddler, can shed light on the extent and quality of this impact. In a wide array of behaviors, toddlers make their autonomy and dependency needs known in day care. How do caregivers respond to these needs? How are adult behaviors modified by toddler-initiated bids? Increased understanding of these functional relationships can more fruitfully direct training efforts to enhance caregiver skills with toddlers.

Types of Bids

Toddlers make clear attempts to communicate with caregivers for a variety of reasons. They may be seeking help from the caregiver or expressing desire for food or an object. For example, toddlers may indicate verbally or physically, or both physically and verbally, that they need help getting down from the climber, or that they need help in interpersonal matters. This can occur, for example, if one child pushes another down and snatches a toy away or won't share the playdough set out for several children. Requesting food or requesting an object or activity is often the goal when the toddler is saying or indicating "I want that", "Me too!" or "Juice". Additionally, toddlers' bids to caregivers may request attention or

give information to the teacher. Toddlers saying, "Look it - it likes to rock" about a doll, or "See" or "Here" or "Look me" are calling attention to themselves or an object that they have.

Toddlers also make distressed bids to the caregiver. Whining or crying when directed at the caregiver is a clear message for comfort (or at least attention) from the caregiver. A toddler may direct a more negative message at the caregiver, such as a kick, a hit, a frown, or a tongue sticking out at the caregiver. Verbally toddlers may yell "Stop!" or "No!" in an attempt to inhibit the caregiver from beginning or continuing a behavior.

Positive approaches on the other hand, include positive greetings such as "Hi", giving a toy or object to the caregiver, actual requests for positive physical contact such as "Sit by me", as well as movements for close contact with the caregiver such as touching the teacher's coat, running up close while looking at the teacher for a response, or crawling into a lap.

Toddlers also seek information from the caregiver. "What's that?" or "Where this go?" or "Right there?" are requests for clarification or information that the toddler does not possess.

Types of Teacher Responses

Teachers respond in many different ways to the different bids that toddlers make to them. When a child shows a teacher a block structure that he or she has just constructed, a teacher may take that opportunity to teach the toddler. Teaching includes informing, facilitating, demonstrating, explaining, or redirecting/refocusing the child toward an alternative learning activity. The teacher may also try what Schachter et al.(1976) have called "ego boosting". When a child is building with blocks, for example, a positive comment such as, "What a nice tall building!", would be coded as an "ego boost". An ego boost may or may not be combined with a teaching technique. A teacher may question a child by asking, "Oh, what color blocks did you use?". A command such as "Sit down" or "Be quiet" may follow

the toddler's bid for attention. A negative response such as an inhibition, "Don't do that", a negative reinforcement, "Why can't you behave?", or a restriction (teacher physically sits child on a "time-out" chair) may follow if the toddler initiates a bid that is undesirable to the teacher. A combination of positive and negative techniques may occur if a teacher first forbids a child by saying "Don't!" but then adds an explanation quickly such as, "I don't want you to get hurt." Simply attending to a child may be a response. Ignoring a child may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Method

Subjects

The present study is part of a larger investigation into teacher-child-peer interactions. The larger study involves 100 two-and three-year-old boys and girls attending day care centers. Subjects for the present analysis were 25 males and 25 females between the ages of 24 and 30 months. The mean age of the children was 27 months. They are members of low-income families whose day care fees are paid by Title XX (federal) funds. The toddlers attended seven different day care centers that serve a low-income clientele in a moderate-sized metropolitan area. Selection of subjects across centers minimized the possibility that behaviors were idiosyncratic to teacher or child functioning or activity setting in any one particular day care center.

Observational System

APPROACH (Caldwell & Honig, 1971), a fine-grained ecological technique for observing and coding child interactions with peers, objects, and caregivers was used to record 80 minutes of behavior per child. Each child was observed four times for four minutes in each of five typical day care settings (creative, story/song, gross motor, fine motor, and eating) during morning hours. No more than two observations per child were carried out for a particular setting on any given day, and no more than five observations per child were recorded on any one

ay. Interobserver reliability in recording the APPROACH records ranged from 70 - 85% for each behavioral category. The five recorders did not know the purpose of the data gathering.

Coding of Toddlers' Bids

From the APPROACH records, children's communication and interaction attempts with teachers were coded into one and only one of the following five categories by two independent coders, who had no knowledge of any hypotheses to be tested. Intercoder reliability was 95.5%.

1. Seeking help (includes seeking bodily help, or help using objects, or help with food or interpersonal assistance; requesting food, or objects, or toys, and asking for permission).

2. Requesting attention (includes seeking teacher's attention for activity involving child's body or an object and/or giving information to teacher.)

3. Distressed or negative approach to teacher (includes distress when it is a clear bid to the teacher, and also includes aggressive physical contact or anger directed toward the teacher).

4. Positive approach (includes a child smiling at, hugging, patting, giving or offering something to teacher, and requesting positive physical contact from teacher).

5. Attempt to seek information (includes requests for clarification or explanation).

Coding of Caregivers' Bids

Teacher responses to toddler communication attempts were coded into one and only one of the following categories. Intercoder reliability was 88.9%.

1. Ego boosts (positive reinforcement alone or in conjunction with a teaching or questioning technique).

2. Teaching (one or a cluster of the following activities: informing,

facilitating, demonstrating, explaining, and directing or refocusing the child toward an activity).

3. Questions (one question, a cluster of questions, or a question with a teaching technique).

4. Attends (looks at child- no physical or verbal interaction).

5. Combinations of positive (1,2, and/or 3) with control or negative (6 and/or 7) responses.

6. Commands (any orders that do not involve engagement of a child with a learning activity).

7. Negative responses (one or a cluster of the following activities: restriction, negative reinforcement, inhibiting or forbidding).

8. Ignores (intentionally or unintentionally).

9. Unknown (no teacher response was recorded during observation interval).

Results and Discussion

Toddlers' Bids

Girls made 341 bids to the teachers and boys made 437 bids in 66 2/3 hours of observations in Title XX day care centers. The number and percentage of each kind of child initiation or communication attempt can be seen in Table 1. Analysis of variance for repeated measures was used to test for significant differences among means. When only two measures were compared, t tests were used.

Insert Table 1 about here

Toddlers approached teachers predominantly in order to seek adult help or attention. Almost 75% of communication attempts were of this nature. Toddlers sought help (39.9% of their bids) signicantly more ($p<.01$) than they approached negatively or in distress (3.9% of their bids).

Hartup (1963) has reported that two-year-olds cling, touch and cry more frequently than five-year-olds who rather seek reassurance and positive attention from adults. Yet, negative/distress approaches were comparatively rare in the repertoire of bids of these day care two-year-olds. Note that almost 20% of toddler approaches to adults were positive. There is a significant difference in favor of positive bids proffered to adults ($p < .06$) compared to negative/distress bids. Seeking information comprised only 5% of toddler approaches to adults. Toddlers both sought help and requested attention more than they sought information ($p < .01$).

Teacher Responses to Toddlers' Bids: General Patterns

Encouragingly, toddlers are responded to with a teaching technique, a question, or an ego boost approximately 60% of the time they attempt to communicate with teachers. Table 2 shows that teachers use a teaching technique (38.4%) more than any other technique ($p < .01$) in response to toddler bids.

Insert Table 2 about here

Toddlers receive a command, negative, or combination response to almost 15% of their bids. A striking 21.4% of the toddlers' bids were ignored. Ignoring occurred more than responding with a combination technique ($p < .05$), a command ($p < .01$) or a negative technique ($p < .01$). This rate of ignoring is disturbing. Data from high quality University-run day care centers suggest that well-trained toddler teachers very rarely (less than 1%) ignore toddler overtures (Honig & Lally, 1975).

Teacher Responses to Toddler Bids: A Microanalysis

Figure 1 permits analysis of two links in the chain of transactions of toddlers and caregivers. At the ends of the spokes visible next to each category

of toddler bid in Figure 1 can be seen the types of teacher responses that occurred to each type of toddler bid.

Insert Figure 1 about here

At the end of each fan spoke appears the number of each adult response type and the percentage that the number represents of the total adult responses to a particular type of child bid.

Responsiveness to seeking help. Toddlers received more teaching bids than any other kind of bid in response to seeking help (46.5%). On almost 2/3 of the occasions that toddlers approached needing assistance, they received a positive response (teaching, questioning, or an ego-boost). Yet, receiving a negative response or no response to 1/3 of their attempts to get adult help may be quite discouraging to toddlers. Two-year-olds are still dependent on adults for reassurance and for assistance in many tasks. If caregivers ignore a toddler's bid for help, that toddler may give up on a task or try negative behaviors to gain the help needed.

Perceptive caregivers may not want to do an entire task for a toddler unless the toddler is exceedingly frustrated. Rather, they may gently encourage the child to try a small part of the task. Sometimes they can provide minimal help to the toddler. For example, an adult can steady a shape sorter box, so that the child can more successfully insert a cut-out shape.

Facilitating toddler success in carrying out activities on their own can have long-range payoffs in increased persistence, skill, and self-confidence. Yet appropriate supports must be given for budding, none-too-sure skills. Teachers need empathy for sudden toddler changes in bravery or willingness to try tasks on their own. If toddler teachers can manage such perceptive, responsive handling of oft-contrary toddler behaviors, then they will nurture ever increasing

autonomy based on secure feelings that adults are helpful, caring, and trustworthy.

Responsiveness to requesting attention. Figure 1 reveals that a toddler bid of "Look me" or "See" to the caregiver is more likely (15.6%) to result in an ego boost than is seeking help (3.2%). Teachers responding positively with specific comments such as "Oh, I like the red colors" are teaching concepts (redness) plus encouraging toddlers to dare to explore, try new activities, and feel successful. One-fourth of the times toddlers requested attention, however, they were ignored. Toddlers not responded to may give up attempting to get that valued teacher attention. They may feel shame for trying and doubt in their abilities and the value of their productions. Toddlers who are thwarted in attaining adult attention (when they are as yet both uncertain in skill and still have strong need for adult approval and affirmation) may learn aversive techniques which will bring them only negative emotional or punitive adult attention. They may learn that to be heard one must yell or do unacceptable or forbidden actions in order to get the desired adult attention.

Responsiveness to distress/negative bids. Adult negative response to toddler bids was relatively rare (1.9% when toddlers sought attention and 2.5% when toddlers sought information). Yet, of adult responses to toddler distress/negative bids, 13.3% were negative and 3.3% were commands. Overall, Figure 1 reveals that on nearly one-half of the occasions when toddlers approached a caregiver in a distressed/negative way (whining, crying, or kicking), they were ignored or responded to in a negative or unsympathetic manner.

Such teacher behavior might be more understandable if upset toddlers were predominately approaching their caregivers with interpersonal negative behaviors. But analysis of the individual distress/negative child bids revealed that 70% reflected toddler distress or neediness rather than assaultive behaviors. Some

teachers may ignore a child's distress bid in the belief that according to Stimulus-Response theory (Skinner, 1948) lack of reinforcement will "extinguish" this behavior. However, Sears' dependency theory predicts that either ignoring dependency needs of young children or inconsistent caregiver responding results in increased child dependency (Sears, Maccoby & Lewin, 1957).

When caregivers, whether intentionally or unintentionally, ignore a toddler's bid, then the toddler's anxiety level may be raised. Increased reassurance seeking, clinging, crying, or other dependency bids may ensue. Prompt meeting of distress needs can on the other hand encourage more varied and positive kinds of communications (rather than cries) from infants.Bell & Ainsworth (1972) found that infants by the end of the first year of life will use a wider variety of communication means such as looks, smiles, and calls rather than crying if their distress needs have been promptly and effectively met during that first year. When crying toddlers approach adults,responsive toddler teachers can model words to say. They can encourage toddlers to point physically to what is wanted. They can give simple choices such as "Do you want juice or milk?" to encourage more appropriate communication from the toddler.

Teachers can communicate in salient ways with their bodies,so that toddlers come to know that comfort is available if needed. Kneeling to eye-level with the toddler can convey a sincere wish to listen to the toddler. Placing a gentle hand on a toddler shoulder or offering a lap or a hug to the toddler can communicate an openness and acceptance of toddler desires for comfort. As distress bids are responded to in positive helpful ways, toddlers may still approach in distress, but will more likely be able to use words such as "Hold me" or "Hug me" rather than whining or crying.

Some of the literature on handling child aggression corroborates the inappropriateness of adult ignoring of child distress behaviors. When adults ignore aggressive acts of preschoolers, then the adult lack of intervention is likely to be interpreted as positive sanction for the aggression, whereupon children then aggress increasingly (Caldwell, 1977; Siegel & Kohn, 1959). Adults can help negatively behaving toddlers achieve more desirable behaviors. Toddlers can be helped to think of alternative ways to express anger or autonomous wishes (Shure & Spivack, 1978). They can be encouraged to think of how others are feeling (Hoffman, 1975). They can learn through watching nurturant caregivers model and demonstrate "live" realistic altruism (Yarrow, Scott & Waxler, 1973). Adults who acknowledge child feelings in "active listening" (Ginott, 1965; Gordon, 1975) can often help dispel the anger and frustration felt by twos.

Teachers should be concerned if a toddler is obsequious and afraid to show anger. Anger is a normal reaction to frustrations as toddlers seek to become separate persons from adults and try to do so much more than their current capabilities allow. Toddlers who hardly ever say, "No!" loudly or rarely move to do things on their own may be afraid to display anger and autonomy for fear of punishment from adults. These children need time with loving caregivers to begin to trust that their initiatives and displays of emotions will be accepted calmly and without anger from the caregiver.

On the other hand a child who displays rage, aggressive behavior, or sadistic behavior is certainly cause for concerned action by caregivers. Such toddlers often need to feel that they are loved and lovable. Caregivers who notice and respond to positive behaviors (no matter how small) while firmly helping children control negative behaviors can build feelings of self worth and enable children to behave more positively. Caregivers of obsequious and angry

children should be involved in discussions with parents , so that home and school are working closely together to provide a consistent environment for toddlers' positive emotional development.

Responsiveness to positive bids. Positive toddler approaches were met by adult ego boosts, teaching, or questioning responses 60% of the time. Again, teachers seemed to meet positive toddler behaviors most appropriately for ensuring their continuance according to either a Stimulus-Response paradigm or Eriksonian theory. Yet the large proportion (25%) of such bids (see Figure 1) that were ignored means that many opportunities were lost for shaping increasingly more positive behaviors.

Caregivers may be reluctant to pick up toddlers or cuddle them on a lap for fear a child will become overly dependent, or for fear there won't be enough lap to go around if all the toddlers want a lap at the same time. Autonomous toddlers usually won't want to be held when exciting materials, playmates, and events are present. The toddler who does is often tired, sick, bored, or in need of "contact comfort" (Harlow & Suomi, 1970) or just needing reassurance that the caregiver still cares. Some toddlers need adult hugs or lap-time when their play plans go awry. If a tall block tower built with much energy falls down because blocks were poorly balanced, a toddler may need to touch base with a caregiver's loving body in order to "fuel up". Body reassurance gives renewed courage to go back to tackling the block-building job all over again. Hugging and holding a toddler and then playing beside the toddler and encouraging play usually gets the child started again with renewed energy. The toddler who is so upset that further play is out of the question needs to be comforted in some way. When a toddler's needs for loving contact are met, then the young child is more rather than less likely to be securely independent in the future (Sears et al, 1957).

Responsiveness to seeking information. Teaching, ego boosts, and questioning responses represent almost 2/3 of adult responses to toddler attempts to seek

information (see Figure 1). Teachers in day care do indeed seem to provide relevant cognitive responses when toddlers approach them with cognitive overtures. Yet, only 5% of toddlers' bids were information seeking. Very few teacher responses to "seeking information" were negative. However, 25% of toddler attempts to seek information were ignored. Ignoring toddlers' information seeking bids can lead two-year-olds to ingenious attempts to gain the teacher's attention. One male toddler asked the caregiver, "What's this?" holding up a puzzle piece for the caregiver to see. The caregiver didn't hear or purposely ignored, so the child repeated, "What is it?" still holding up the piece for the caregiver to see. After no adult response the toddler said to self, "I don't know" in a very discouraged tone of voice. The toddler then held the puzzle piece over a yellow basin and said to the caregiver, "Put in here?" looking up at her. Finally, the toddler received a response! "No, put it in your puzzle" stated the caregiver firmly.

The small number of toddler bids to attain information is disturbing. These data suggest that in order to boost toddlers' initiations of cognitive behaviors teachers may need to give more vigorous attention to creating intellective conditions, challenges, and response sets suitable for twos. Teacher training needs to focus on helping adults become more sensitive to the particular cognitive enrichment needs of children who are just entering Piaget's (1952) preoperational period, and who may still exhibit a good deal of sensorimotor functioning. Adults who engage toddlers in stage-appropriate activities, who inform them, and who show them enthusiastically when so requested can best serve to stimulate the cognitive questions of toddlers (Honig & Wittmer, 1981). A two-year-old asking, "You got flower?" to a caregiver can be excitedly responded to with, "Yes, Melinda gave the flower to me. See the pretty petals. You can feel the soft petals." Teachers can design curricular experiences that challenge two-year-olds and yet are highly motivating, such as water play with many kinds of utensils. Teachers need to enhance

information-seeking behaviors of toddlers with materials and with persons. Ingenious curricular planning can increase toddler curiosity and need-to-know.

Tizard (1981) in her study of language at home and at school in England found that both middle-class and working-class preschoolers asked about 26 questions per hour at home contrasted with only about 2 questions per hour at school. The longest conversations in school and at home occurred when adult and child were participating jointly in an activity, rather than adult watching child or child watching adult. Joint activities, however, were six times an hour more likely to occur at home. Both at home and in the classroom these joint activities seem to provide the child with an extended time to initiate questions and time for the adult to answer. Many times in the classroom, teachers cut conversations short in order to encourage the child to become involved in play. Joint activities in the classroom, then, such as cooking, cleaning up, making playdough, working with playdough, planting seeds, or putting away toys may encourage the toddler to seek more information and become involved in more extended conversations with the teacher.

Conclusions

Adults ignore different types of toddler bids at similar rates - between 15% and 30%. Rather than attempting to "extinguish" certain behaviors, caregivers may feel "bombarded" by stimuli in the classroom and be unable to respond to all toddlers' bids. Interestingly, the rate of response (75%) of the toddlers to caregivers was approximately the same as the caregivers' rate of response (79%) to the toddlers. Sensitizing caregivers to the importance of responding, however, would hopefully increase the rate of response to toddlers, whereas a talk with the toddlers would probably not have a similar effect in increasing their response rate to caregivers!

If toddlers are made to feel that their questions and activities are unimportant or are a nuisance, they may feel shame and doubt about trying to do things and thinking on their own. The prime Eriksonian task of toddlers is to develop a sense of self-confidence and self-actualization. Caregivers may need help in learning how to respond more contingently and effectively to make toddlers feel more secure about themselves and their initiatives toward adults as well as with materials and peers.

Table 1

Toddler Bids to Teachers

Type of Toddler Bid	Total		From Males		From Females	
	N[a]	%[b]	N[a]	%[b]	N[a]	%[b]
1. Seek Help	310	39.9	183	41.9	127	37.2
2. Request Attention	257	33.0	147	33.6	110	32.3
3. Distress/Negative	30	3.9	23	5.3	7	2.1
4. Positive	141	18.1	56	12.8	85	24.9
5. Seek Information	40	5.1	28	6.4	12	3.5
Totals	778	100%	437	100%	341	100%

Note. Data are reported for 25 male and 25 female toddlers
a = The number of toddler bids.

b = The percentage of the total repertoire that the number represents.

Table 2

Teacher Responses to Toddler Bids

Type of Teacher Response	To Males		To Females	
	N[a]	%[b]	N[a]	%[b]
1. Ego Boost	86	11.0	51	11.7	35	10.2
2. Teaching	298	38.4	176	40.3	122	36.0
3. Question	105	13.5	63	14.4	42	12.3
4. Attends	5	.5	2	.5	3	.9
5. Combination	62	8.0	39	8.9	23	6.7
6. Command	16	2.1	9	2.1	7	2.0
7. Negative	31	4.0	20	4.6	11	3.2
8. Ignore	167	21.4	75	17.2	92	26.9
9. Unknown	8	1.0	2	.5	6	1.8
Totals	778	100%	437	100%	341	100%

Note. Data are reported for 25 male and 25 female toddlers

a = The number of teacher responses made.

b = The percentage of the total repertoire that the number represents.

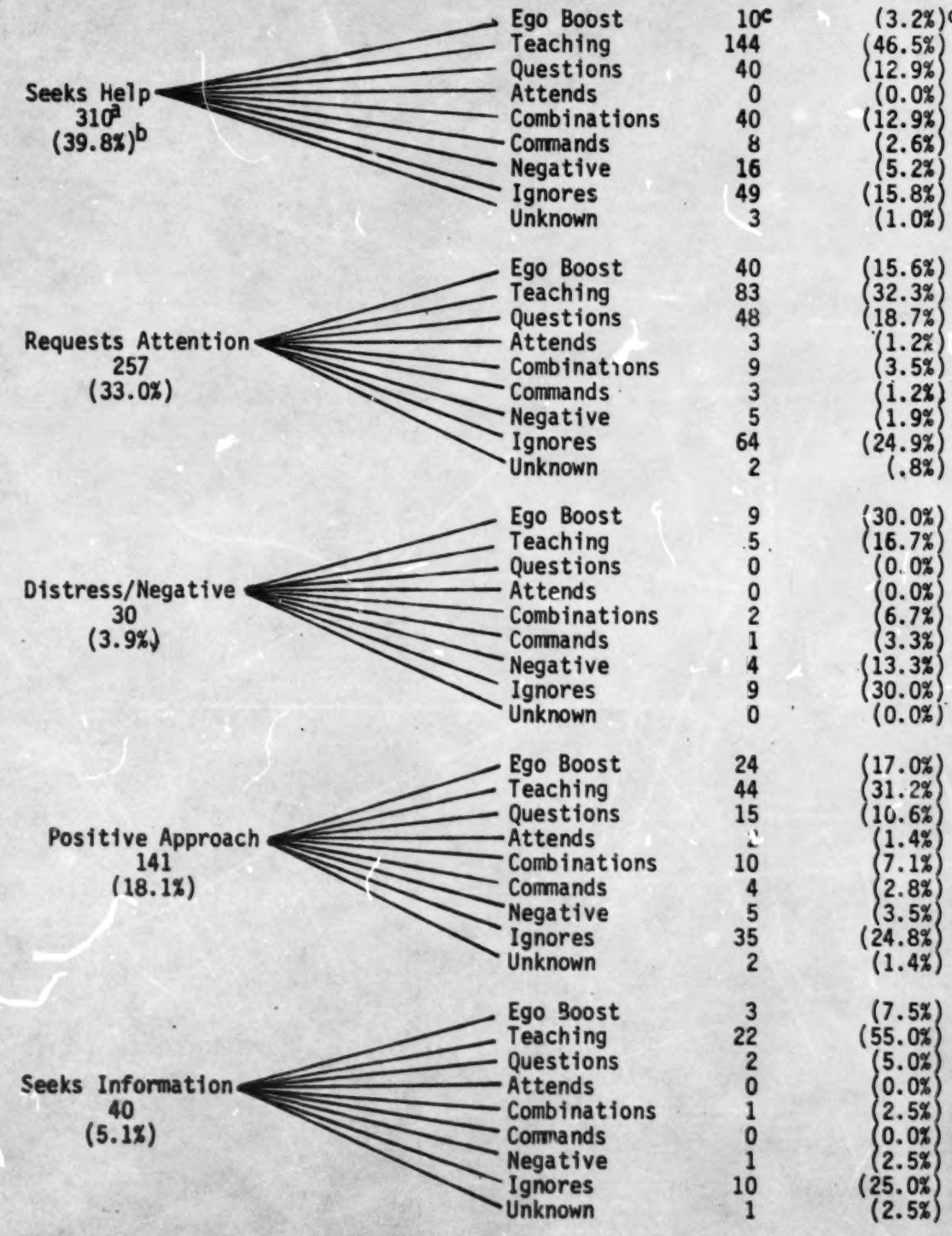

Figure 1. Caregiver Response to Male and Female Toddler Bids.
a. Number of child bids of this type
b. Percentage of all child bids that this type of bid represents
c. Number of teacher responses of this type to the particular type of bid on left
d. Percentage of all types of teacher techniques that this type of technique represents in response to the particular type of bid on left. Each teacher response set (each fan) represents a totality adding up to 100%.

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